



February 25, 2005

The Honorable Diana DeGette  
House of Representatives  
1530 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative DeGette:

The Alpha-1 Foundation strongly supports your legislation, The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, expanding federal support for human stem cell research. Currently, there is nothing that repairs the lung tissue damage associated with the genetic disorder Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency. The greatest future promise lies in reparative medicine and therapies that will most likely be based on stem cell technology. Your legislation offers hope to individuals with Alpha-1 and their family members.

More than three years have passed since President Bush articulated the current federal policy in this area in a nationally televised statement in August 2001. Since then, we have learned much more about the potential of research on human stem cells to open vistas of scientific research for future therapies and cures that could save millions of lives at risk today from diseases and medical conditions including Alzheimer's disease, cancer, juvenile diabetes, Parkinson's, traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injuries. We have also learned that the limitations placed by the existing federal policy are consigning U.S. medical research to the sidelines even as other nations are hurrying to develop this field. As you know, American scientists report that it is increasingly difficult to not only attract new scientists but also to retain current scientist to stem cell research out of concern that federal restrictions will keep this crucial research from being successful.

Your legislation would allow broader federal funding for stem cell research, while ensuring no federal funding shall be used to derive stem cells or destroy embryos. The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act also would direct the National Institutes of Health to develop appropriate ethical guidelines for future derivation of human stem cell lines.

The Board of Directors of the Alpha-1 Foundation salutes your leadership. We thank you for your dedicated efforts to preserve the promise of medical research for all Americans.

Sincerely,

  
John W. Walsh  
President & CEO

cc: Meghan Taira

2937 SW 27th Avenue  
Suite 302  
Miami, Florida 33133  
Toll Free: (888) 825-7421  
Tel: (305) 567-9888  
Fax: (305) 567-1317  
[www.alphaone.org](http://www.alphaone.org)

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